

APPENDIX F
PUBLIC COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

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INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) would like to extend our appreciation to members of the public and agency officials who took the time to review and submit comments on BLM's Draft Coachella Valley California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment, Draft Trails Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

As a federal agency, we are committed to managing the public lands and resources for the benefit of the people of the United States. Through the planning and environmental review process, BLM has the responsibility to establish a sound land and resource management strategy for the public lands, taking into consideration the various ideas offered by the public. Public participation, through the planning and environmental review process, is key to making better land and resource management decisions.

Source of Public Comments. Public comments submitted during the 90-day public comment period (June 7 through September 5, 2002) on the draft plans and EIS, came from a variety of sources and are included in their entirety in this appendix. The BLM received 23 comment letters, electronic mail messages or facsimiles. The transcripts from public hearings held on July 22, 23 and 25, 2002 for this plan are included. Pertinent transcript pages from the California Desert District Advisory Council meeting held on June 29, 2002, and the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Advisory Committee meeting held on July 30, 2002 are also included.

Public Comment Analysis. Over 200 comments were extracted from the various letters, electronic mail messages, and public meeting transcripts. These comments are presented in this Appendix as "public concern statements." Similar "public concern statements" were grouped together, organized by topic (a list of which is presented in the table of contents provided at the beginning of this appendix.) Staff evaluated the "public concern statements," and prepared written responses, which are presented below.

"Substantive comments" were assessed and considered both collectively and individually (40 CFR 1504.4 and BLM Manual H-1790-1, Section V.B.4). Substantive comments may result in changes to the Final EIS in the following ways:

- 1) Modify alternatives including the proposed action;
- 2) Develop and evaluate alternatives not previously given serious consideration by the agency;
- 3) Supplement, improve or modify its analyses;
- 4) Make factual corrections.

As a general rule, the Bureau does not respond to opinion statements. Every opinion, however different from other opinions, is valid in its own right. Opinion statements are not treated as “votes.” All opinions are taken into consideration before the Bureau renders a decision (BLM Manual H-1790-1, Section V.B.4).

Sometimes members of the public, in their comments, request actions outside the scope of this plan or outside BLM’s jurisdiction altogether. In the Bureau’s responses, we tried to identify the appropriate venue or agency to address such a comment.

PUBLIC COMMENT SUBMISSIONS

Each letter, facsimile message, and electronic message submitted to BLM during the public comment period (June 7 through September 5, 2002) is reproduced in the following pages of this Appendix. These documents are arranged in the following order:

Federal agency comments

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Tribal comments

Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians

Morongo Band of Mission Indians

State of California agency comments

California State Lands Commission

Department of Fish and Game

University of California Cooperative Extension

University of California, Riverside—Boyd Deep Canyon Desert Research Center

Local government comments

City of La Quinta

City of Palm Desert

City of Palm Springs

Local agency comments

Imperial Irrigation District

Interest group comments

California Association of 4 Wheel Dive Clubs, Inc.

Center for Biological Diversity; California Wilderness Coalition

Desert Riders

San Diego Off-Road Coalition; Off-Road Business Association; California Off-Road Vehicle Association

Sierra Club

General (non-affiliated) public comments

Paul Adelizi, Whitewater Trout Company

Jonathan Cook

Steven Harris, Off-Road Rentals

Stephen Mascaro

Public hearing transcripts; comments provide by:

Gayle Cady
Jim Fitzpatrick, Motion Picture Association
Don Goms, Coachella Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District
Terry Kay
Will Lewis, Desert Side Tracks
Nancy Madson
Jesse McKeever
Jeffrey Morgan, Sierra Club
Greg Mottino, Desert Side Tracks
Ralph Sargent, Desert Side Tracks
Betty Mangan Smith
Kayla Thames, California Film Commission

Advisory council / committee transcripts

California Desert District Advisory Council
Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Advisory
Committee

For clarity, original letters are reproduced instead of their facsimile counterparts. Where the date stamp indicates receipt on September 6, 2002 or thereafter, BLM has retained copies of the facsimile transmission as proof of receipt before close of the comment period.